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WOOD-CARVING.

THE art of wood-carving has always been a favorite one, but has always suffered from the drawbacks of requiring a vast deal of patience on the part of the artist in order to produce really good work, owing to the nature of the material in which he wrought. It is not easy to find wood in which the chisels and gravers can produce clean, clear cuts, without check or split, and so allow of the doing of fine work. It is also difficult to find pieces of wood large enough for any extensive work, and consequently the specimens of fine wood-work to be found are usually small. It is perhaps for this reason as much as any other, that wood-carving, while of the nature of sculpture, has not taken rank with work in marble or metal, in which, although by means slightly different, the finest and most delicate effects may be produced. These remarks, however, as a matter of course apply chiefly to large works; for smaller works, wood is capable, in the hands of a skillful carver, of taking the most beautiful forms and showing clearly the finest and most delicate lines, being surpassed by nothing unless it be ivory, and surpassing ivory in the slight tint which even the whitest wood possesses, and which produces a warmer and more pleasing effect than the hard polished white of the ivory.

For the best specimens of wood-carving we must go to Germany, where a high degree of perfection in the art was attained during the Middle Ages. It was chiefly used for ecclesiastical subjects and church decoration, some large works, such as altar-pieces and the like, having been produced. Fine examples of these may be seen in the churches at Prague, Erfurt, Altenberg, and also in Pomerania, the most elaborate being a large carving illustrating the doctrine of transubstantiation, in a church at Tribsees. Many of the Belgian churches are also similarly ornamented. Another celebrated specimen is found in the ornamentation of the cathedral at Schleswig, done in the sixteenth century, as were most of these great works.

Among those who have made most reputation as carvers in wood have been Michael Wolgemuth, of Nuremberg, who lived early in the sixteenth century, and who may be said to have first become famous in this department of art. Following him came Veit Stoss, and later, Hans Bruggemann. And when, later in the century, smaller works took the place of the large altar-pieces, Albert Dürer produced some beautiful specimens, though probably not so many as have been credited to him. At one time portraits in box-wood held the lead in fashion, and in this line Hans Schwartz, of Augsburg, produced the works which have been, and are, most esteemed.

Of the smaller articles in wood-carving to which we have alluded, many exist, chiefly in the hands of *virtuosi* and collectors, and in public museums, though many are also found scattered during the lapse of generations. These included not only things as small as book-covers, but even fire-screens and larger articles of furniture, like chairs, bedsteads and tables, were also profusely ornamented by small carved figures, groups and designs, some beautiful and some only grotesque.

About the seventeenth century wood-carving fell very much into desuetude, and in that and the next century ivory-carving came more into favor. Wood has, however, never been entirely neglected, and, especially in Germany and Switzerland, some beautiful specimens have been produced, many of which may be seen at the Centennial Exposition. Lately it has again come into favor, in the general revival of interest in mediæval art and artists, and, in addition to the work of those who make it a profession, some ex-

ceedingly creditable work has been done by amateurs. Indeed, such has been the improvement in the tools and methods of working, that wood-carving may now be made one of the most fascinating ways in which persons of artistic tendencies can spend their spare time—producing objects of beauty at a very small outlay of money or labor. The best way for the beginner in this pursuit is undoubtedly to commence with “scroll-work,” for which tools and all needed materials are easily procurable, and then, as skill in manipulation is gradually acquired, to progress to the use of the chisel and graver.

The best woods for the purpose are box—which is exclusively for fine engravings, and on which lines of microscopic fineness may be cut, as may be seen in any number of THE ALDINE—Irish bogwood, maple, beech, holly, mahogany, apple, pear, oak, and perhaps a few others, care being taken to secure a wood of close grain and free from knots or checks.



CARVED BOOK-COVER IN BOX-WOOD.

We give an engraving of a cover for a religious book, carved from box-wood, which may serve at once as a good example of what has been done in this line of art, and also as an incentive to those of our readers who desire to begin its practice. They may not equal it, but will find pleasure and profit in contemplating and emulating the best models.

ART IN PHILADELPHIA.

HANS MAKART IN THE CENTENNIAL.

THE people who stand before the pictures in Memorial Hall, and naively remark, “We don’t know much about art, but we know what pleases us,” are as numerous as ever, and continue to put forth this original and interesting statement with unwavering pertinacity. With all due respect, I beg leave to submit that the great American public can very well afford, after a century of culture, to dispense with this observation. It is a form of words, not at all sound, which we need not hold fast any longer. In the first place, it has become wearisome; and in the second, it is not quite true. Those who are given to saying they know what pleases them, unfortunately do not

know anything of the kind. To analyze emotion and assign causes to sensation, requires subjectively insight, critical faculty and special training; and objectively, an acquaintance with the material sources of the impressions under consideration. Those who “do not know much about art” see, for instance, a picture which “pleases” them. To say what it is in the picture that affords the pleasant impressions, involves not only a knowledge of art, but a knowledge of human nature too, which few persons even among artists, and only the most catholic critics, ever possess.

There are certain things, however, that generally attract interested attention and affect the majority of beholders, though each individual differently, doubtless, as his character permits. Incident is, I take it, the most widely and readily appreciated: pathetic incident coming first, and humorous suggestion probably second. A mother kneeling beside a baby’s bed, lovers parting, a youth leaving home, and a boy sprawling on the ice or a clown tumbling over a donkey’s ears,—these, if rendered with skill enough to be recognizable, are immediately accepted as good pictures.

Next to the story, I think rich effects of light and shade, and color, such as our artists give in autumnal landscapes, are found “pleasing.” There should be point of some kind in the picture made prominent enough to hang the title on, otherwise the agreeable impression will often be dissipated in vain effort to understand the subject. This is not always the case, however, as I have seen visitors returning again and again to Thomas Moran’s Turneresque sunset scenes, although they apprehended but dimly the ideas the artist intended to convey.

Thanks to the reproduction in black and white of meritorious works, a better knowledge of elementary art has of late years been disseminated, and as a consequence we find vigorous drawing, especially in bold imitations of nature, more and more widely approved. The representation of a well-posed figure, or a spirited bit of action, will find many admirers, and thousands will be “pleased” with it who years ago would not have noticed these characteristics.

I have spent many a long warm day in the art galleries of the Centennial Exhibition, looking at the people as well as at the pictures, and the results of my observations are about as given above. Of the twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand people who daily visit these galleries, nine hundred in each thousand regard only the pictures which represent or illustrate human experiences, those which show strong effects of color, and those in which there is skillful drawing of familiar objects. Whether there is one in each thousand who knows which of these attributes it is that attracts his attention, I very much doubt. This may look like a low estimate of art culture among the masses of our people; but as far as it goes, I think it is nearly right. And if there are from two hundred to five hundred daily visitors who have some better understanding of the merits of the pictures, and better appreciation of their worth, these surely represent a constituency of intelligence quite as numerous as we have any reason to look for. Besides, the fact that nearly all who enter the Exhibition find satisfaction in spending a considerable part of their limited time among the works of art, is in itself encouraging. And in this view it is perhaps not altogether a misfortune that a majority of the works are “suited to the capacity” of the multitude. The thousands of pictures, marbles, etc., will give to the thousands of people new ideas that can not fail to supplement helpfully those imbibed from the factory, the farm and the forge.

Next to the English, the Austrian collection I think will be found of greatest interest to Americans, though it should be borne in mind that at present writing the

contributions from the galleries of the Marquis of Salamanca, which are to enrich the Spanish collection, have not yet arrived. The Austrian exhibit is not only strong in works of merit, but it introduces us into new territory in the world of art. We have been vaguely aware of the rapid progress of art in Austria, and intelligent Americans visiting Vienna have returned with good report and with examples of rare worth, as witness the "Abundancia" of Makart, exhibited from this country, and two portraits of New Yorkers, Nos. 165 and 166 of the Austrian catalogue, painted by Von Angeli. But our public has been practically unacquainted with Austrian art, and this exhibit comes to us in some sort as a surprise.

The standard of merit in this exhibit is very high. There is no cheap, poor or crude work to be seen, and though all the paintings are for sale, there is not the slightest suggestion of trade speculation, which, I regret to say, is not observable in the apartments of some other European countries.

As heretofore stated, there is not a fine gallery in either of the buildings devoted to art, and consequently none of the large pictures in the exhibition are suitably hung. The Austrian pictures are crowded into a comparatively small room, hardly wider than a broad hallway. The greater part of one wall is occupied by Makart's "Venice paying Homage to Catharine Cornaro." This work should be placed at the end of a grand salon, where it could be seen with the advantages of perspective and appropriate surroundings. In the contracted space assigned to Austria, it is hardly possible to see the whole picture at once, much less to get any adequate single impression of it. I am not now finding fault on Austria's account: there has no partiality been shown, and none of the exhibiting nations are better situated.

In painting this picture, Makart has aspired to fulfill the highest offices of representative art, unless sacred composition be excepted; and his work is so far successful that it will generally be accepted as the great picture of the Centennial Exhibition. The epus is a striking incident in Venetian history, which, though authentic, has become so obscured in the lapse of ages that the artist's imagination has not been hampered by dimly discerned details. All we need to know is that the Catharine Cornaro of the picture is the widowed Queen of Cyprus returning to her native Venice, and bringing the sovereignty of the rich and beautiful island as a free gift to the republic. The scene delineated is the reception of Catharine by her compatriots with a public ovation on her arrival. Seated on a temporary throne erected near the waterfront of Saint Mark's Place, the royal lady receives the offerings and homage of the people. They bring the fruits and flowers and products of art and industry peculiar to Venice, appealing—intentionally, perhaps—to the returning widow's memories of her childhood's home.

The artist has conceived the occasion as a spontaneous demonstration by the people, the only indication of state participation in the affair being the presence of an official dignitary in crimson robes at the queen's right hand. All the other figures which fill the canvas are the citizens and populace of every grade. The idea conveyed to my mind is that the people are not only acknowledging the gift of a kingdom, but are exulting that a daughter of Venice should prefer the home of her nativity to the proud throne of the Cyprian kingdom. Most numerous among the multitude approaching the throne are women and girls, the incidental intent of the painter apparently being to illustrate the types of feminine beauty for which Venice in her glory was famed throughout the world.

However critics may differ in other respects, none can deny to Makart perfect mastery of the art of composition. In this picture, as also in the pendant pair entitled "Abundancia," he exhibits a master's ability to make his figures stand together on the same plane, and this without the aid of any accessories whatever. Excepting the prow of a sumptuous gondola, some spars and sails in the middle distance, and a bit of architecture, the entire canvas is occupied by the throng of gift-bearers, with nothing to give perspec-

tive or to suggest space; and yet the groupings are natural and free, each figure occupies its own place on the ground, and there is not a stiff or forced attitude among them all.

Notwithstanding the gorgeousness of the scene—a wealth of richest draperies being an appropriate and noticeable characteristic—the picture is comparatively low in tone and the color seems subdued. This peculiarity, also observable in the "Abundancia," and which in an unfavorable light appears almost monochromatic, would suggest that the artist lacks confidence in his power as a colorist. But any such impression must give way when close attention reveals evidences of assurance that would, in weaker hands, amount to audacity.

The figure of the queen is draped in creamy-white silken fabric, almost covered with an embroidery of pearls. The only color given is the red-gold of her majesty's flowing tresses, the especial pride of the beautiful blondes of the Adriatic. There being nothing salient in the drawing of the voluminous robes, this treatment leaves the centre-point of interest in the picture entirely devoid of the advantage of emphasis of any kind. Leaving the queen, then, supported only by the majesty of her own gracious presence, Makart has massed about her throne the strongest and most trying tints on his palette. She is almost surrounded by deep, rich crimson; the figure of the state official on her right hand, the hangings of the dais in the background, and the gondolier in the foreground, making a continuity of color nearly uninterrupted. But so entirely successful is this bold innovation, that Catharine Cornaro is the one prominent object, and dominates the whole composition as she should do.

In drawing, Makart is at once strong and refined. Nothing could be more gracefully suggested than the timidity of a baby-girl, shrinking half-afraid from the great dog in the foreground; and nothing more vigorous than the magnificent pose of that dark-skinned daughter of the Rialto bearing an amphora on her shoulder. His extended and careful study of the figure is shown by the immense number of personages introduced on his canvas, each having a distinct individuality characteristically portrayed.

With the genius to conceive and the imagination to bring forth "Venice paying Homage to Catharine Cornaro;" with the knowledge and skill exhibited in the execution of that work; with the ambition of youth; with the enthusiasm of devotion to art; with the opportunities afforded by high appreciation at home and abroad—there can be no question that Hans Makart will become one of the greatest painters of our time. He is now about thirty-six years of age, having been born in Salzburg in 1840. His early education was begun in Vienna; but he first studied drawing under Bellotti, in Munich. As an artist, however, he is a pupil of Von Angeli, and is decidedly the first among that master's many famous students. He now resides in Vienna, where he has a fine mansion and studio built for him in a beautiful garden, by the emperor. He has, as his pictures show, immense facility of execution, and paints with wonderful rapidity. The noble head of Karl Costenoble the sculptor, who stood for one of the Venetian magnates near the throne of Catharine Cornaro, was painted in less than half an hour, and the likeness is admirable, while the modeling and flesh tints are as life-like as pigment can be.

The picture selected for illustration in this number of THE ALDINE—the portrait of Charlotte Wolter in the character of Messalina—is one of Hans Makart's best, and is not only artistically worthy of notice, but is also, in Vienna, as much a favorite as are the painter and the actress.

Immediately opposite to Makart's great picture hangs Eugen Felix's "Pan and Bacchantes," a work which might be described as an undertaking to reconcile the classic and the romantic schools of art. The motive is, simply enough, the expression of beauty as embodied in woman's form, and this motive is developed with the fidelity of a Greek sculptor. At the same time the artist takes liberties with his composition, but with such success that he can hardly fail to

be justified even in the eyes of severe adherents to classic precedent.

The subject is a Bacchante, nude, standing in an easy attitude, reaching upward, making an offering of wine to an image of Pan. A broad pour of light, centering about the breast, illumines the figure, glorious in the splendor of womanly symmetry and grace. This is wondrous beautiful and according to canon; but at her feet reclines a sister-Bacchante, in shadow, and here the flesh tints are toned down, affording an effective contrast with the refulgent loveliness of the principal figure. If this was not intended as a foil, it serves the purpose of one most efficiently; but the harmony of the composition is not in the least disturbed by it, and it seems to me that only hypercritical taste could object to its introduction.

"Sans Souci," by Joseph Fux, of Vienna, is an excellent delineation of character, and exhibits high qualities as a work of observation, a study of life, and also as a painting of a difficult subject. A young Italian itinerant, *Il Trovatore* of the highway, who has seen enough of the world to be confident of his ability to take care of himself, stands equipped for a tramp, and returns the observer's gaze with a look half-merry and half-defiant. He is ready to take any road, he does not care which, and has all his belongings slung about his person—a guitar, pipes and various characteristic "properties"—and his sole companion, an intelligent ape, rides upon his arm. There is something appropriately free and spirited in the painting of this picture, as if the artist felt perfectly competent to solve all the problems involved in its production, and was good-naturedly careless of other people's opinions as to his success.

The Austrian collection is rich in portraits and life-studies, but comparatively poor in landscapes. The most noticeable of the latter class is No. 116 of the catalogue, by Robertus Russ, of Vienna. A country road winds among noble oaks, one of which has fallen, and an ox-team halts beside it. At a way-side pool a young girl stoops over the water, pulling flags. The time is evening, and the twilight shining between the great boles is charmingly rendered. Mr. Russ has studied tree forms and foliage with conscientious fidelity, and his cattle and figures are painted with knowledge and skill remarkable in a landscape artist.

I must not close this brief and insufficient notice without mentioning two marbles by Karl Costenoble, also of Vienna. These are portrait busts of Charles V. and Maximilian I., both admirably modeled and full of life and character. These are the only marbles exhibited from Austria, but they are of more value to art-students than whole ship-loads of shop-work to be seen in the annex. —John V. Sears.

A HARD PROBLEM.

Not by any means the first one, old or young, black or white, who has found it difficult to "make up a slate" to suit him is our young friend. It is evident that he has reached a "sticking-point"—the point which comes sooner or later in all problems, whether mathematical, social or political. In his case the problem is evidently mathematical: there is nothing to suggest politics either in his age or aspect; and it is very certain that no conundrum in social science is bothering him. It is only one of those old questions about the number of bricks in a wall, or perhaps it is a solution of that old query about the way of dividing an uncertain amount of molasses between three people by means of several receptacles of unknown capacity. Be the precise nature of the problem, however, what it may, it has evidently caused no small amount of trouble in the mind of our young friend; and his face, with its expression of doubt and perplexity, is perfectly faithful in its naturalness, and is worthy of close study both for this reason and because of its excellent drawing and the careful management of light and shade shown not only in the face, but also in the entire figure. Let us hope that the "hard problem" will be satisfactorily solved by the young mathematician, who is evidently just as hard at work and just as much puzzled as was Archimedes when asked to detect the dishonest goldsmiths.